





N. 4.

# ARGUMENTS

IN

SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED BILL

FOR THE

## REGISTRATION OF SLAVES

IN THE

### West Indian Colonies ;

BEING

## A REPLY

TO THE

### WORK OF MR. CHALMERS,

ENTITLED

Proofs and Demonstrations how much the projected Registry of Colonial Negroes is unfounded and uncalled for : comprehending the Reports and Resolves of the Bahama Assembly, on the Principle and Detail of the proposed Registry : with the Examinations, on Oath, of the most respectable Persons, as to the Facts of the Case. The whole arranged, and an Introduction prefixed, by *George Chalmers*, F. R. S. S. A.

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ARGUMENTS

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE writer of the following pages has happily developed and exposed to public notice the efforts of a party, through the medium of their avowed advocate and organ, to rivet and perpetuate the chains that gall the persons of a large portion of *his Majesty's subjects* in the West Indies. It is, therefore, only a mere act of justice to the cause, which, with its advocates, has been so shamefully calumniated, and in which the writer has produced so able and masterly a disquisition, to give it an extended diffusion throughout the country.

The friends of the African race, from the commencement of their endeavours (now more than thirty years ago) to alleviate the miseries, the indescribable miseries, of that unhappy people, have never lost sight of the *real* interests of those of their fellow-subjects to whom the laws of the country have conceded the power of retaining their fellow men in slavery. They are as well convinced, as the holders of slaves themselves, that the premature emancipation of a class of beings, depressed and degraded as the slaves are below the par of human nature, would not only most seriously affect their employers, but would be fraught with incalculable injury to the individuals under such moral and intellectual privations.

The practice of slavery is now generally reprobated throughout Europe; and even the *Algerine* has been compelled to relinquish his inveterate habits, and to cease from subjecting his fellow men to that abhorred state. May we not then entertain a hope, that the day is fast approaching when *Algerine principle and practice* will be forever discarded from every part of the British dominions?

It may, without hesitation, be averred, that it is acting a kind part towards the white population of the West Indian Islands, to recommend them most seriously and cordially to set about ameliorating the condition of their slaves, and that for their own sakes; for, without pretending to the spirit of prediction, it may with confidence be presumed, and it is earnestly suggested to the notice of the West Indian planters, *that their present system cannot stand*; that there is a more tremendous and overwhelming power than the fleet of Lord Exmouth in full sail towards their shores; a power, before which all the high-toned sentiments and lordly declarations of bodies of men as well as individuals will vanish like smoke; for THE MARCH OF TRUTH has been rapid within these few years, and its progress will be irresistible

# ARGUMENTS,

§c. §c.

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WE have already, in two articles, in two preceding numbers, exhibited an outline of the reasons which indicate the importance of a registration of the slaves in the West Indies ; and have exhibited a considerable portion of the objections to that measure, with answers to them.

We do not expect the opponents of that registration to be easily silenced. To refute is one thing ; to silence is another. The heat with which it is opposed shows evidently, that strong interests are affected by it. And where strong interests are affected, men commonly are far enough from yielding, when only defeated in argument. A good argument cannot be answered ; but nothing in the world is more easy than to resist it. This is a task to which either ignorance, or dishonesty, is always perfectly competent.

We have said, that the conduct of the West India gentlemen proves the existence of strong interests in opposition to the registration act : this they do not deny. The only question then is, whether these interests are legitimate or illegitimate interests ; interests which good legislation will seek to promote, or interests which it will endeavour to destroy. We have endeavoured to show, and have, we think, shown, that no legitimate interests are opposed to the registration act ; no interests, but such as a good legislature will always endeavour to subvert. In the mean time the press is not idle with publications which attempt to maintain the opposite doctrine. We deem it our duty to examine all of them which contain any thing remarkable ; and we expect not to meet with any which contain more of what is remarkable than the production before us.

We have remarked in a former number, and we think the fact is of great importance—that the general arguments which are urged by

the opponents of the measure are almost all such arguments as prove that wherever power exists, the right also exists of abusing that power; they are, almost all of them, the very arguments which have been employed to prove "the right divine of governing wrong;" they are, almost all, the very arguments which have been employed to prove, that *the privileged few* have a right to every thing they choose—the *non-privileged many*, a right to nothing at all.

We perceive also, that the accusations, which these advocates for the right of abusing power advance against their opponents, are pretty numerous. For example, we perceive that one of their accusations against them is—that they are religious; or that they are saints. But the grand accusation of all is, that they will not admit any such right, as the right of governing wrong. If they will not admit that right, there is no crime, it seems, of which they will not be guilty. They are Anarchists! Jacobins! Incendiaries! every thing horrible which the imagination can conceive!

If this be the mode of arguing, as we affirm it is, and appeal to the publications before the world for our proof, we leave the reader to estimate the importance of the fact; we leave him to judge what sort of a cause that must ever be, which needs to be supported by such doctrines!

Mr. Chalmers begins: "One of the wisest of men has said, that there is nothing new under the sun;" and doubtless we owe him much for such a repetition! It did not suit Mr. Chalmers to tell us in what sense it is true, and in what sense it is not true. That might have been saintship, or Jacobinism. In one sense of the word *new*, and that the most common sense, *every thing* under the sun is new, as no one event is ever the same with any other event. Every day is a new day; and every night a new night. When Mr. Chalmers came into the world, he was surely a new man, and not the same with any that had ever existed before him. If by the word *new*, however, he only means that there is nothing new which bears not some resemblance, some analogy, more near or more remote, to something or another which has existed before, this is indeed true; but what it makes to the present purpose we leave for Mr. Chalmers to demonstrate.

We shall now quote a passage from Mr. Chalmers. It is pretty long; but it is one of the most instructive we ever read.



“ The JACOBINS of our own times have said nothing, and done little, that is altogether new. Godwin and Penry, in our own nation, and Languet and Le Coq, in the neighbouring kingdom, during the reign of Elizabeth, avowed the wildest doctrines, scribbled the most seditious sentiments, tending to sap the fundamentals of society ; and by insinuation and perseverance endeavoured to convince the multitude, that nothing established could stand in the way of their projected changes. In all their plans and proceedings they perseveringly supposed, that they had only to wave their wands of innovation, to dissolve the potentates and powers of the earth into airy nothing. A wise sovereign, however, and an able minister, had the good fortune, the result of their wisdom, to preserve the state unimpaired, notwithstanding the private intrigues and open seditiousness of such innovators, who ventured their lives in prosecuting their dangerous projects.\*

“ But the principles of those plausible innovators were now sown in every district of our island. New men every where sprung up, who had learned the dangerous doctrines of those seditious characters ; who, with equal skill and boldness, were as active and persevering. They called in religion to their aid ; they adopted an appearance of piousness in their daily discourse ; they practised every sort of deception, while they openly inculcated the most specious habits of fair dealing ; they assumed every shape to gain their various ends ; they engaged many proselytes by the plausibility of their pretensions, the piety of their speech, and the apparent purity of their usual manners. They thus made a prodigious impression on the great body of the people, even before that saddest epoch in our eventful annals, ‘ when civil dudgeon first ran high.’ After proselyting the people to their doctrines, and preparing them for change, during a series of disputations years, a civil war was the wretched result. The conflicts of a dozen years drenched the nation in kindred blood. The whole fabric of the constitution in church and state was torn down ; when the peers’ house was voted to be useless ; and the sovereign head of both, by a prodigious perversion of common justice and common sense, was brought to the scaffold,

‘ By vilest hands to vulgar use debased,  
With sacrilegious taunt, and impious jest.’

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\* The practices of Penry brought that intriguing scribbler to the gibbet.

“Contemporary writers of great names embodied into history those various principles and dangerous practices, all those civil contests and domestic warfare, with their sad effects, the ruin of the constitution, and the sacrifice of the sovereign. The historians of our own age have related the same events, and inculcated the instructive lessons, resulting from the facts, which it is the peculiar province of history to teach statesmen and legislators for their practical government. But, whatever might be the celebrity of some of those historians, their lessons of experience did not prevent the neighbouring nation, though of somewhat different cast, from running a similar race of frantic folly. The men who produced events of such mighty mischief in Britain were called Puritans from their affectations: the men who deluded France to her destruction and disgrace, acquired the odious name of Jacobins from the appellation of their establishment. Alas! what devastations and injury have not the French revolutions brought upon Europe! In order to restore such a variety of nations to their former situations, how many thousands of brave men have we not lost! How many hundred millions of sterling money has not Britain expended! in a noble cause, indeed, but to the embarrassment of the state, and the distress of the people. ‘Distressful and desolating events, which have attended the mistakes of politicians, should be ever present in their minds,’ saith the wise and virtuous Watts.

“Yet, from all those ‘distressful and desolating events,’ have our people, have our ‘politicians’ learned the lessons of experience? No. Do not the descendants of the men who propagated such wild doctrines, and introduced such disordered practices in our island during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, still exist among us? as wild in their theories, as busy in their habits, as abominable in their ends, as ever! Have we not amongst us societies of every sort and size, for effecting every purpose by any means? Yes: if we may judge from what we hear and see; if we may decide from the doctrines of their predecessors, and the daily practices of the existing members of those clubs. One of those societies came out of late to protect the persecuted protestants of France. They were told that the character of the facts did not evince any thing like persecution: yet they persevered. They were informed, that the French protestants, trusting to their king’s charter, did not want

their help. They continued, however, to collect money, and to raise the cry of persecution. At length, was published a letter to the same society, from the chief of our armies in France, who seems to be as great a statesman as a soldier, assuring them that there was no persecution; that the French protestants relied for protection and favour on the king and his charters. Yet did our society, concealing this letter, with its assurances, persevere in its outcries and collections. Another letter to our society was soon after published, from one of the ruling protestants in France, assuring our society that they were not persecuted; that they trusted to the king's charter; that they desired not any aid from abroad. Yet our society, concealing also this letter, continued the outcries of persecution; inviting the English people to pity the persecuted, and to contribute some money for their protection. Our society was now charged with disingenuously concealing those letters and assurances, for giving stage effect to their practices, however abominable. Our society now stammered in speech, blustered a little, and again retired under the shelter of invisibility. The whole conduct of our society showed, however, to intelligent eyes, that they were a disciplined body, who acted under command. Here is a genuine picture of the ancient Puritans! the same purpose of sedition; the same activity of intermeddling; the same disingenuousness; the same perseverance of design. We may thus see, incidentally, that we have societies among us who, at the beat of the 'drum ecclesiastic,' are ready to rise, to agitate the multitude, to delude the credulous, to carry their object by whatever means. Yes, we have our clubs and institutes, serious and spiritual, philosophical and political. Whoever reads with any attention the journals as they come out, daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly, must clearly perceive, that there are many pens employed, under whatever direction, to agitate the people, to heighten their prejudices, to misrepresent the principles of our religion, to sap the foundations of our establishments in church and state, to malign and distress, to incite and irritate the transatlantic departments of our extensive empire.

"Yet, danger is not apprehended. When some clubs were lately formed at Paris, consisting chiefly of popular delegates of no small

note, how ready were we, by our publications, to instruct the members of the Parisian clubs, how such clubs had produced so many revolutions in France ; how dangerous they were to the purity and independence of the two Chambers of the assembled Estates ; and how much it behoved all wise and well-meaning men to discourage such clubs, or similar institutions ; considering their mischievous effects on the constituted authorities, by influencing their proceedings, and on the general quiet, by agitating the popular mind ! But, quick as we were in seeing the rise of the Parisian clubs, and active as we were in detecting their dangerous tendency, we seem not to have looked, with any emotion, on our own societies, clubs, and institutes ; we seem not to have inquired much about their proceedings at home or abroad, whether salutary or dangerous ; whether any of those institutes coveted the loaves and fishes of the community ; whether they intrigued for the promotion of their friends, in their worldly concernments ; whether they interposed in the common proceedings of our constituted authorities, either to forward their measures, or retard their ends. So much more apt are we to extend our observations to foreign countries, than to look at home, for objects of reprehension, or measures of danger.

“ Of those several societies and clubs, the most notable must be allowed to be the African Institution ; whether we regard its numbers and names, its avowed objects and daily pursuits, or the cloud which involves its ultimate aims in the darkest obscurity. When the Slave Trade was finally abolished in 1807, this Institution seems to have risen out of the remains of that society and party, which obtained that measure, after eighteen years struggle. The avowed objects of that Institution appear to have been various, and beneficent ; chiefly tending ‘to remove the barriers, which have so long obstructed the natural course of improvement in Africa.’ To civilize such a country, to instruct and energize such a people, and to convert barbarity to civilization, were noble objects, which were beyond their power. Such objects were, perhaps, merely thrown out, to captivate benevolence, to incite attention, and to gain associates. By attempting impossibilities, the African Institution appears, from every information, to have egregiously failed in all. In fact, Africa has not been civilized and instructed ; Africa has not been energized, and habituated to husbandry. If we may believe the

representations of some of the governors of the African factories, the wretched inhabitants, near the western coast, have rather fallen back into idleness; and to be more than ever, to use Thomson's language,

‘ A brute, unlively mass, inert, and dead.’

“ And if those failures had been foreseen, the Institution goes on to avow some other objects : ‘ It may be proper to premise, that it will naturally become the duty and care of this society, to watch over the execution of the laws recently enacted in this and other countries, abolishing the African Slave Trade ; to endeavour to prevent the infraction of those laws ; and, from time to time, to suggest any means, by which they may be rendered more effectual to their objects ; and likewise to endeavour, by communicating information, and by other appropriate methods, to promote the Abolition of the Slave Trade by Foreign Powers.’

“ Such, then, were the objects of this potent society ; though we may easily suppose, that the leaders had latent designs, which they were too circumspect to avow to the world.”

We now entreat the reader to go over this passage with us again, and with some attention ; it will reward our pains. Reflections which would fill up volumes arise from it.

The writer begins with the word *Jacobins*, which he prints in capitals, to show what stress he lays upon it. And the whole aim of the passage, as the reader perceives, is to prove two things : in the first place, that to be a Jacobin is to be very wicked ; in the next place, that to seek to register the slaves in the West Indies, is to be a Jacobin. Let us examine these positions.

In our last Number, we said, that upon an attentive consideration of the use which is made of the word *Jacobin*, by all those who employ it, we find that, in nine times out of ten, it is applied not to any thing which is hurtful to mankind ; but applied, as here, to things which are beneficial to mankind ; often to things which are in the highest degree beneficial, and are only hurtful to some illegitimate interest of the parties who employ it. The prudent man, therefore, when he hears the word *Jacobin* applied, as it is applied in this case to the registration of slaves in the West Indies, will not immediately, and as a matter of course, conclude, that the thing to which it is applied, is a bad thing. He will

reason with himself thus: If the word Jacobin is applied, once indeed in ten times to things that are bad; but nine times in ten to things that are good, the probability is great, that, when I hear the word Jacobin, I hear of something, as this registration, of which I ought to approve. It is always possible, before I examine, that I shall find it applied to something that is bad; it is, however, ten to one that I shall find it employed for no other purpose than to defeat, as here, some project for the good of mankind on a large scale, that some small knot of individuals may continue to enjoy some mischievous advantage.

He mentions two old writers in our own country, and two in France; of whose writings at this moment we happen to have little or no knowledge. But we are very far indeed from supposing that they uttered any sentiments which were not of the highest importance to mankind, though they did not write agreeably to the persecuting and arbitrary governments of an Elizabeth and a Louis. We are far indeed from being sure that a person who was brought by Elizabeth "to the scaffold for scribbling," was not a martyr to the cause of human kind! when we know, even from Hume, that she was with much difficulty prevented from bringing a man to the torture or the gibbet (we forget which), for writing some observations on her government, which, instead of being thought punishable, in even the slightest degree, would at the present day be thought fawning and slavish. The government of England under an Elizabeth, who menaced the representatives of the people for "meddling with affairs of state;" the government of France under a Richelieu, who perfected the military despotism;—these exhibit the state of government which Mr. Chalmers admires! and these are the political principles which are brought to cast odium upon the endeavours of those who wish to procure some of the rights of humanity for their coloured brethren in the transatlantic isles! The friends of the Blacks will not be ashamed of being classed with the friends of liberty, all over the world. And the Blacks may rejoice, that they seem at last to have no enemies, but those who are, at the same time, the enemies of mankind!

Mr. Chalmers, in his zeal to cast odium upon the authors of the measure for the registration of the slaves, proceeds, in the next para-

graph, to defame those men to whose exertions it is owing that a single spark of liberty of conscience—that a single security for the rights of the people, were preserved alive in these islands. Those men who were immured in dungeons, or cut down with soldiers, by the persecuting Stuarts, for worshipping God according to their consciences, Penn and Mead for example, “adopted the *appearance* of piousness in their daily discourse,” and “they practised every sort of deception, while they openly inculcated the most specious habits of fair dealing!” Those men, who in vindication of the laws of their country, and of every thing dear to men, refused to pay taxes without consent of parliament; and upon whom war was made to compel them to a subjection, under which life was not worth preserving, are talked of as men who shed *innocent* blood, and brought forward to cast infamy on the friends of the Blacks! Those memorable proceedings, through which we arrived at the revolution of 1688; that revolution which freed us from a tyrannical and persecuting race of princes, and placed the house of Brunswick upon the throne, are talked of as causes of national misfortune; as full of guiltiness and crime! Would that all other nations had met with similar misfortunes! What a paradise by this time would the world have become! The friends of the Blacks need not dread the want of success, if such arguments alone can be brought against them, as defame the revolution which saved us from despotism; and would stigmatize, as lawless usurpers, the family which sits, by choice of the nation, upon the English throne.

From the authors of the English revolution, Mr. Chalmers proceeds, in his next paragraph, to the authors of the French revolution; endeavouring to represent the authors of the English revolution, the authors of the French revolution, and the authors of the measure for the registration of the West India slaves, as all men of the same stamp. The authors of the measure for the registration of the slaves; as well as those men to whom it is owing that we are enabled to worship God according to our consciences, and enjoy any one of the privileges of free men—we feel ourselves strongly interested in defending. The authors of the French revolution we are desirous of leaving to the judgment of the world. All that we shall attempt is, not to let Mr. Chalmers attach the odium which has

fallen upon them, to a cause which has nothing to do with them or their proceedings. For this purpose, it is necessary to remark, that the conduct of the authors of the French revolution is necessarily and essentially distinguished into two parts. The first is, their opposition to despotism. The second is, what they did in the course of that opposition. In the first, they undoubtedly agree both with the authors of our revolution, and with the authors of the measure for the registration of the slaves. But does it follow, that the authors of the measure for the registration of the slaves, are the authors of any thing that is evil? In the course of opposing despotism, it is indeed true that crimes may be committed; and crimes may be committed in opposing theft, or robbery, or murder. But we are as far from esteeming opposition to despotism, in itself, a bad thing, as we are from esteeming opposition to theft, robbery, and murder, a bad thing. The crimes which have been committed in opposing despotism, (and crimes have been committed in opposing it, both in France and England) have our condemnation, as the virtues which have been displayed in opposing it, have our love and admiration, in every corner of the world.

The next paragraph, against "societies," and "clubs," and "institutes," and "Puritans," is a master-piece. We entreat the reader to look at it again, and to say what a plight we should be in, had this gentleman, and those who resemble him, their will of us! By the men "who propagated wild doctrines," he means the Puritans, as appears by the scope of the discourse, and what he says afterwards. By the nickname of Puritans, is meant the whole body of persecuted dissenters. These men, he says, "have still descendants" among us. That is to say, we have still dissenters among us. Thank God, we have! What Mr. Chalmers would have done with them, presently appears. They are "as wild," he says, "in their theories, as busy in their habits, as *abominable* in their ends, as ever!" What a people! Who can deny that extermination is too good for them?—"Wild in their theories:" Yes; they say, that in matters of religion, each man should think for himself; and that it is unjust and wicked to endeavour to hinder him.—"Busy in their habits:" Yes, they are not at all idle in doing good both to the minds and bodies of men.—"Abominable in their ends:" Yes, their grand objects are, to obtain liberty of conscience, and adequate security for



the rights of every member of the community.—For these causes, undoubtedly, they merit the execration of all the enemies of mankind; and the authors of the measure for the registration of the slaves, deserve, as here, to be classed along with them.

“ We have societies,” he says, “ for effecting every purpose, *by any means*.” Here no exception is made; we have not a society which will not effect its purposes, *by any means*; that is, which will stick at any wickedness to accomplish its ends. If this is true, all societies ought to be abolished. But Mr. Chalmers himself is kind enough to give us warning not to believe him. Notwithstanding the wickedness which he ascribes to all societies, he adds five great letters to his name in the title-page, which inform us, that he himself belongs to two societies. Does he wish us to believe that they are wicked; and that he himself is a partaker in their wickedness? If not; and if his mighty condemnation would deceive and mislead us in regard to those two, the probability is, that it is equally false and deceptions in regard to the rest.

“ One of those societies came out of late to protect the persecuted Protestants of France.” There was wickedness! What an execrable design! But the French Protestants said, they did not want any assistance. When the emperor of Morocco orders any of his subjects to be flayed alive, they offer him a profusion of thanks, and tell him how grateful they are for being honoured with so much of his princely regards. Take any of the most wretched of the slaves in the West Indies, whose back is still streaming with the whip, and ask, in the presence of his tormentor, if he is cruelly used, he will assure you, in the strongest terms, that nobody can be treated more humanely. Alas! the French Protestants said they did not want assistance! What a proof!

This society is “ a genuine picture of the ancient Puritans.” We are very glad to hear it. For the ancient Puritans had great energy, and great perseverance; and we hope this society will display both. They have great advantages beyond their predecessors. They have only such obstacles to contend with as the pamphlets of Mr. Chalmers. Their predecessors had dungeons. If they do not produce much greater effects than the Puritans, they will have themselves to blame. A want of the proper exertions will be the only cause.

What Mr. Chalmers, abusing this society, calls “ purpose of se-

dition," is a wish to promote the best interests of human society ; what he calls " activity of intermeddling," is vigilance and energy, in so great a cause ; what he calls " disingenuousness," is that clear-sightedness which refuses to be duped by the apostles of persecution and despotism : " perseverance of design," we do not, with him, reckon a vice, but one of the most important of all virtues.

" Of those several societies and clubs, the most notable must be allowed to be the African Institution :," the most notable of those societies, " for effecting every purpose, *by any means !*" Ever since the world began, the men who have endeavoured to benefit the great body of their fellow-creatures, have been treated in this manner by those who have an interest in oppressing their fellow-creatures. So long as the human mind remained without knowledge, and without strength, the arts of the impostors in general prevailed ; the friends of mankind were almost always baffled ; the small number abused their advantages over the great number ; and misery covered the surface of the globe. The human mind is slowly rising above this readiness to be deceived. In time, these arts will have little influence. As yet, however, much need remains for putting the world on its guard against them. The cry of Jacobinism, artfully associated with a good cause, has of late been very successful in raising prejudice against it. Mr. Chalmers, who seems to be well acquainted with this use of the term Jacobin, endeavours, as we see, with more strength of will than understanding, to attach it to the measure of registering the West India slaves.

The avowed object of the African Institution is to promote the civilization of Africa ; and he allows, that this is a beneficent object. But he distinctly declares his belief, that this profession is only a deceitful lure ! that it is arrant hypocrisy ! that " the ultimate aims of this society are involved, by a cloud, in the darkest obscurity !" " that its leaders have latent designs, which they are too circumspect to avow to the world !" Now what is to be thought of a man who throws out accusations of this sort, without adducing, or having to adduce, one single fact, or a shadow of a fact, as evidence to support them ? What is to be thought of the man who throws out such accusations against any portion of his fellow men, however unknown, and therefore how little soever benefited by known facts to disprove such imputations ? If this would deserve indignation,

what does he deserve who throws them out against men who are known, and who surely are not known for their wickedness? who are allowed, we think, by those who have no partiality towards them, to be rather above than below the level of average virtue?—accusations thrown out, therefore, not only without a shadow of proof, but in contempt and defiance of proof, and strong proof? Now, if one were to go on to talk about latent designs, is there any latent design, provided only it is not a good one, that might not find a comfortable home in a breast teeming with accusations like these?

He then reproaches them with want of success. We, too, have *lamented* their want of success; and we are well assured that *we* do not lament it more than *they* lament it themselves. Their want of success is their misfortune, though Mr. Chalmers would place it among their latent designs. Of what is capable of being done for civilising Africa, Mr. Chalmers gives no proof that he is in any the smallest degree qualified to be a judge. He has not pointed out a single instance of wrong or negligent conduct in the African Institution on the coast of Africa; any thing done which ought not to have been done; any thing omitted which ought to have been performed. To accuse people of want of success, without showing that the proper measures have not been taken for securing it, is to accuse without being able to impute a fault. The object, however, of Mr. Chalmers, is to insinuate, that to promote the civilization of Africa is an impossibility. One thing is certain, that he does all that he can to prevent it. We may, however, undertake to assure him, and if he knew any thing of human nature he would be ashamed to deny; that man is essentially an improveable being, and, whenever accidental obstructions are removed, always improves of his own accord. Remove these obstructions from the Africans, and no fear but they will improve.

From calumniating the measure of the registration, together with the authors of it, Mr. Chalmers does come at last to what may be regarded as argument, or statement, in opposition to it. This is legitimate hostility, and shall be respectfully treated.

He affirms, that the abolition acts are sufficient to prevent the importation of slaves into the West Indies. In support of this affirmation he makes another affirmation, that in most of the islands the

planters have not an interest in such importation. These two affirmations have been made by other opponents of the measure of the registration. They have been considered at length by Mr. Stephen, in his Second Letter to Mr. Wilberforce, of which we gave some account in our last number. To this able work we must refer for a refutation of both these affirmations. There the reader will find it: a refutation, in our opinion, as complete and satisfactory as any thing which we ever had the pleasure of perusing. Till this refutation is answered and overthrown, to repeat these assertions is not argument, is not discussion; it is an act of vulgar impudence, and nothing more.

We believe, however, that to this imputation Mr. Chalmers is not liable for any thing said in the present production, which, for aught we know, was published as early as the Letter.

Mr. Stephen has shown, by the declarations of the planters themselves, that they *have* an interest in the importation of slaves, and abundant means for effecting that importation. Mr. Stephen points out the means: he shows that these means exist, and that they are quite sufficient for the end.

If they have no interest in importing negroes, why are the abolition acts necessary? why does it require such heavy penalties to prevent the trade? To assert that there exists not an interest to import slaves into the West Indies, is to make an assertion in the face of known and notorious facts. Mr. Chalmers says, "The whole navy of England was let loose upon the slave-traders." What use would there have been for this, if there was no interest to import? There would not have been a single slave-ship upon the ocean. It is not enough to say, that these ships carried for other nations; the demand of other nations is small compared with ours. But Mr. Chalmers, had it suited him to give a *proof* of his affirmation, might, with the utmost ease, have produced what would have been quite conclusive. He might have stated, from authentic sources, what is the price of a slave in our islands; and then have given, from equally authentic sources, the cost at which a slave could be purchased in Africa, and transported to the West Indies. If we saw that the price of a slave in the islands is so low, that a slave could not be imported from Africa, and afford at that price a profit to the importer, we should immediately be convinced that nobody had an interest in

importing slaves into those islands, and that no slave would be imported, though every prohibiting law were immediately abolished. But if the price of slaves in our islands is so high, that slaves from Africa can be imported and sold with a great profit (a fact which, we believe, will not be contested), then to say that there is not an interest to import slaves, and that slaves will not be imported, unless effectual measures are taken to prevent it, is not a feat beyond the reach of the lovers and advocates of slavery; but it is a species of courage which, hereafter, will yield their cause but little service.

Why does Mr. Chalmers contradict the whole body of planters? Is his testimony to be taken in opposition to that of all the men who are best acquainted with the facts? Did these men not oppose the abolition acts? Did they not stir heaven and earth to oppose them? Did they not represent them as in the highest degree injurious to them?—Why? if they had no interest in the importation of slaves. What an unhappy cause, that needs such affirmations to be made in its support! and what an unhappy advocate, that can prevail upon himself to make them!

Mr. Chalmers mentions the severity of the abolition acts as an argument against the registration;—with how little judgment every body must perceive. Suppose the abolition acts adequate to prevent every British ship and sailor from being employed in the slave-trade, and that is supposing much, it would hardly oppose any obstacle to the slave-trade, and to the importation of slaves into the British islands. Other nations carry slaves, as many as they please, from Africa to their own settlements; and Mr. Stephen shows that there is no sort of difficulty in smuggling them from these settlements into ours.

It is this circumstance, which Mr. Chalmers has not ventured to contradict, which renders the registration of slaves into our West India islands an indispensable measure; if we really choose the abolition, as far as we are concerned, to be effectual; and wish not to see our abolition acts worse than a dead letter; not in any degree hindering the importation of slaves, but only hindering our own people from having the advantage of it.

Suppose what Mr. Chalmers would have us to believe: first, that the West India planters would not import slaves if they could; next, that they could not if they would. In that case, what harm can re-

gistration do them? It takes away no man's slave; it rather tends to make the property of him more secure. Why then do they oppose the registration? why are their actions in direct contradiction to their words? And which are we to believe?—To this last question no one will hesitate about the proper answer.

Mr. Chalmers goes on:—The authors of the measure for the registration “propose, without showing very distinctly their motives, to establish a registration of the whole negroes of the British West Indies, by a minute description of their names and nature, of their forms and marks: so that, having obtained this record of the names and characteristics of the whole negroes of the king's colonies, they mean to have it declared, that every negro whom an informer may point out as without those head-marks, shall be free, and that the pretended owners shall be punished by forfeiture. The zealous projectors of this outrageous measure mean to move the parliament to legalize their unexampled project, and thereby to make the British legislature their instrument of a thousand wrongs.”

“Without showing very distinctly their motives.” It is very disagreeable to be obliged to contradict a gentleman so often upon precise matters of fact. The declared object of the registration bill is, to prevent the clandestine importation of slaves into our West India colonies, contrary to the intent and meaning of the abolition acts:—this, and this alone. For our own parts, we cannot conceive the motives of the authors of a law to be more distinctly shown. What good, then, could Mr. Chalmers suppose that it would do his cause? to say that the motives to this measure were not distinctly shown?

“Registration by a minute description,” &c. No doubt; when it is necessary that the individual should be registered, it is necessary that all those facts should be registered which are required to distinguish him from every other individual; without this, a pretended registration would be no registration. Is there any thing in this to which the author objects? If there is, why does he not speak out? Does he not know that such a registration is established,—established in his own country with regard to every soldier of the king?—“their names and nature, their forms and marks?” For whose benefit?—for that of their employer, to be sure. And it would equally be for the benefit of the employers of the slaves to have them

as minutely registered, if there were not certain facts connected with the possession of those slaves, which their employers are interested in concealing from the public. If there is nothing which the planters have an interest in concealing; if there is not something which, if known, would not be allowed, connected with the possession of the slaves, there is not a possible shape in which the most exact and minute registration of the slaves, made without much expense, would not be advantageous to the owners of the slaves.

When any thing is made an ordinance of law, it is necessary to sanction it with a penalty. It would be the same thing as no law, if it were as free to any man to transgress, as to obey it. When a penalty is annexed to the transgression of any ordinance of law, it is necessary that the penalty should be heavy enough to outweigh the temptation which in all ordinary cases may lead to transgression. If by disobeying a law a man could gain a hundred pounds, he must be fined not less than a hundred pounds, otherwise he receives a premium for his disobedience. If it should be made an ordinance of law to register every slave in the West Indies, some penalty must be appointed for those who disobey the law: and that penalty must be sufficiently heavy to outweigh the profit which may be made by disobeying the law. It appeared to the projectors of the law, that the value of the slave by whose non-registration the law was violated, would be an adequate penalty, and not by any means too much. It appeared, also, that to impose this penalty in the particular form of declaring the slave to be free, would be attended with peculiar advantages; because in this manner the law would contribute greatly to ensure the exactness of its own execution. In all this there appears to us an unusual display of legislative wisdom.

Mr. Chalmers seems to be exceedingly enraged at the penalty: he cannot endure the thought of the penalty. No wonder:—if there were no penalty, he, and those for whose interest he writes, would feel themselves very much at their ease; their objections to the law would be very inconsiderable. When people have no wish to do that which the law commands, it is only the penalty which is apt to grieve them.

Mr. Chalmers does not say, that if the legislature thinks it fit to make a law for registering the slaves, it ought not to ordain

a punishment for those who disobey the law ; he does not say, that the value of the slave is a fine too high for such disobedience.

Leaving all this, he only shows his violent detestation of the penalty ; which proves nothing but a violent disinclination to perform the act which the intended law would enjoin. To all those who obey, the penalty is as nothing.

He calls it an “ *outrageous measure* :”—*Outrageous*, for what ? Is it *outrageous* on account of *the act to be performed* ?—is it outrageous to require such an act to be performed in regard to the slaves, as is performed in regard to the British soldier ? as is performed, in great measure, with regard to every British subject of the military sex and age under the militia laws ? as under a good government it would be good to have performed with regard to every individual in the community ? Is this outrageous ?

Or is the measure *outrageous*, in the opinion of Mr. Chalmers, on account of the *penalty* ? Why does the gentleman not explain himself ? Every merchant who imports certain kinds of goods, and does not enter them at the custom-house, forfeits the goods. Is it a less crime, in his venerable opinion, to smuggle a slave than to smuggle an Indian shawl ? Is that which is not more than a proper forfeit in the case of the shawl, outrageous in the case of the human being ? Oh brave lovers of slavery !

“ An *unexampled* project !” Putting the slaves on the level on which Mr. Chalmers and his employers would have them put, that of mere goods, is it unexampled, when there is any temptation to fraud, to have an account taken of people’s goods ? Are not the goods of the brewer, of the maltster, of the manufacturer, of every species of excisable commodity, not merely registered, but subject to the perpetual inspection of the officers of revenue ? Is a fraud upon the revenue a more heinous transgression than a fraud upon the liberty of a human being ?

“ A thousand wrongs !”—*Wrongs* to the slave-owners, by prohibiting the importation of slaves, already forbidden by law ! In no other respect can the registration of their slaves be other than beneficial to them ! “ A thousand wrongs” in obeying the law ! It follows that they have a thousand advantages in violating it. So



has the smuggler in Europe; and for that reason, the laws for the registration and inspection of his goods are enacted—to prevent those undue advantages.

Mr. Chalmers, quitting the pretence that there is no need for the registration as a means for preventing the importation of slaves, proceeds to another topic, the want of right on the part of the British parliament to legislate for the West India colonies. “The leading members of the African Institution,” he says, “propose that the parliament should legislate for the British colonists in their domestic affairs, without having an adequate cause; without adopting the constitutional mode of the king’s recommendation to their several assemblies, the projectors go the full length of moving the parliament to deprive the British colonists of their free governments.”

Upon this topic we should imagine Mr. Chalmers must have been very much puzzled indeed. For an apostle of the “divine right,” and of “passive obedience and non-resistance,” this was a ground as dangerous as any on which he could possibly tread. Something was to be given up; either his principles or his argument. We shall see how Mr. Chalmers manages the matter. “The British government has no right to legislate for the colonies.” If so, the resistance of the Americans was not a crime; as people, like Mr. Chalmers, have been so fond of calling it. Mr. Chalmers, however, endeavours to save himself by putting in the clause “without having an adequate cause.” Now we desire him to explain himself a little: he must not think to shuffle off behind an equivocating expression. Does he mean to say, that, when the British legislature *has* an adequate cause, it may legislate for the colonies? Or does he mean to say, that whatever cause it may have, it never can have a right to legislate for the colonies? Why does he mince and mutter? why not speak out? If he means the first thing, all the question is about the cause; if he means the last, it was beside the purpose for him so much as to mention the cause.

Let us examine the last supposition first. Let us suppose, that how great soever the cause, still it is Mr. Chalmers’s doctrine, that the British legislature is bound not to interfere. This doctrine has been so fully refuted by Mr. Stephen, and we have already given so full an account of his argument, that we think it unnecessary to say

much more upon the subject. We shall be content with a single observation. The doctrine involves this monstrous consequence:—that the people in the colonies are the subjects of the British legislature—that the British legislature is bound, as all legislatures are bound, to preserve one portion of its subjects from doing injury to another portion of its subjects—that, notwithstanding this, a small number of its subjects in the West Indies may do injury to the great number of its subjects there, to any excess however enormous; and the British legislature must sit still, and look on, without daring to make a law to prevent it!—The people in the West Indies are in that case without law!

If this hideous proposition be untenable, we come then to the question of the occasion, or cause. For we are abundantly ready to allow to Mr. Chalmers, or to any body else, that the British legislature ought not to make laws for its subjects in the West Indies, and, we add, for any other portion of its subjects, without adequate cause.—Now, is there, or is there not, adequate cause for the British legislature to make a law for the registration of the slaves?

The argument, we think, may be stated very shortly; and in a form which amounts to demonstration.

The British legislature has made a law to prohibit the importation of slaves into the British West India islands. The voice of humanity, and the vindication of its own legislative authority impose the strongest obligation upon the parliament to see that its law is not violated, and the intention of it defeated. Mr. Stephen has most fully proved, that no security can be taken sufficient to prevent the violation of that law, and the frustration of its object, except the registration of the slaves; or at least none can be taken so good, as the registration. The case then, to the British legislature, is a case not of choice, but necessity. Unless the registration, or something equivalent, is effected, the British legislature must behold its legislative will defeated; its solemn enactments disobeyed by its own subjects; and remain without a remedy! Is this the spectacle which Mr. Chalmers wishes the British legislature to present to the world?

Mr. Chalmers says, Why not ask the colonists to make a registration law for themselves? We ask, Why have the colonists not

made such a law of their own accord? Why, instead of showing any inclination for the making of such a law, even after the necessity for it was displayed to the British parliament, have they made every possible exertion to prevent the making of such a law? The British legislature sees, as all the world sees, that nothing can be more contrary to the will of the colonists than to make such a law; and that they never will make it, unless by compulsion. If the British legislature mean to have such a law, it must either make such a law itself, or it must *compel* the colonists to make it. Now, with regard to the colonists, we desire to know where is the difference, between taking a law from the British legislature, and making it, through compulsion, under its immediate dictation? The difference to the British legislature between making the law itself, and giving it to the colonists to make, is this—that if it make the law itself, every thing will be done which can be done to make it answer its end: if it gives it to the colonists to make, every thing will be done which dares be done to make it incapable of answering its end.

The colonists will excuse us if we say again, that, on the subject of the slaves, we cannot trust them. Mr. Stephen has said much upon this subject; and we too have said something; to which we must refer the reader. We treat them not unfairly. We treat them no otherwise than the British constitution, and all sound political theory, say that all men ought to be treated—that wherever there is power there is a tendency to abuse it; wherever there is power there ought to be checks; that no men ought to be judges in their own cause; that no men ought to have the power of making laws to sanction their own wrongs, or to promote their own interests, at the expense of another portion of their fellow-creatures. If they dispute any of these doctrines, we shall be glad to hear what they have to produce against them.

It is amusing to find a “passive-obedience” man, talking of the discontent of a people against the measures of their government, and even their resistance, not indeed with approbation expressed in distinct propositions; no! that would make the matter too glaring; but without a syllable of disapprobation; with an *air* of approbation; with such an account of the causes of the resistance, as indicates that it is a resistance, amply deserved. “They will think,” says

he—the people of the colonies “will think,” if they are obliged to register their slaves, “that nothing is left to a free people worth living for.” Excellent! Earnestly do we desire that no people on earth had any thing more taken away of “the things worth living for!” that we, for example, of these happy islands, had nothing to complain of but the hardship of being obliged to register the animated part of our property, or indeed every part and parcel of it. To how great a degree is it now registered under the taxation laws? And to how much greater a degree was it registered under the property-tax? How great an advantage it is for the most valuable sort of property—land, to be registered, all the world allows. Are not wills registered; and, by consequence, all the property to which they relate? Who knows not that a good system of registration, applied as extensively as possible, to both persons and things, would, under a good government, increase prodigiously the security both of person and property; would strengthen exceedingly the hands both of justice and police; and that, in fact, you can have neither a good police, nor a good administration of justice, without it?

If we take this as a specimen of the “passive-obedience” men, we shall understand their rule of “non-resistance.” Resistance to government is most intensely wicked when the grievance complained of arises from those abuses and defects by which they profit. But whenever government proposes to make a reform, however admirable, how much soever calculated to increase the benefits derivable from government, if that reform is to cut off any undue source of profit which they wish to enjoy; oh! then, nothing but resistance can occur to any man’s thoughts; “nothing is then left which to a free people is worth living for!” “This projected measure,” writing in a proper book the name and description of every slave, “is fifty times more vexatious than the stamp act of notorious memory; twenty times more incentive than it of general discontent; and a dozen times more generative than it of popular commotion.” If this be true, there must be some vast source of profit open to the colonists when the slaves are not registered, which will be shut when they are: for surely the act of registration, the bare giving of the name and description of a man’s slaves, to be entered in a book, cannot be regarded as at

all "vexatious," as at all "incentive of discontent," or "generative of popular commotion," unless people are to a very singular degree disposed for discontent and commotion. Now it is strongly suspected that the colonists *have* a source of profit of such a description; namely, in the illegal importation of slaves. It is this source of profit, and this alone, which can account for the furious language of the colonists and their *hired* (for they have no other) advocates, against the measure of registration. This, however, the colonists deny. They affirm that they have not that source of profit. The reason for affirming and denying, after such a fashion, is sufficiently visible. But in that case their outcry is altogether unreasonable and absurd. It is an effect without a cause. The conclusion is obvious.

We challenge them to show in what manner the giving the name and description of his slave needs to "vex" any man, unless he has obtained him by unlawful means: on what account it can excite his "discontent," unless by rendering it impossible for him to conceal transactions which the law condemns: in what way it has a tendency to excite "commotion" among the colonists, except as the gallows has a tendency to excite commotion among thieves.

The registration act will produce all these horrid effects—in what way? In the following, if we believe Mr. Chalmers: "by impressing upon the minds of an irritated people that the real object of such measures must necessarily be to make the free slaves, and the slaves free." He says, that such will be the impression upon the minds of an *irritated* people. And truly they must be irritated indeed, for they must be out of their senses!

What is there in the necessity of giving, to be inserted in a book, the name and description of his slave, that should, according to the assertion of Mr. Chalmers, make any free man a slave? We desire to know this. We ask Mr. Chalmers, why he makes assertions destitute of proof? why he ventures to treat the public with such indignity? We call upon him for his proof. And we tell him, that all the infamy which can lie upon a man, for producing assertions which he is unable to prove, will rest upon him, if he fails in answering the challenge.

If the necessity of registering that particular part of his property, which consists of his fellow creatures, has not the smallest tendency to make any free man a slave ; so has it not the smallest tendency to make any lawful slave free. Every slave which a man possesses lawfully, remains his property after registration as much as before ; remains, and with additional securities. It will, after registration, be much more easy to recover the slave if he is lost, either by having been stolen, or by running away. An additional value is therefore communicated by registration to every slave that is lawfully possessed. If any slave is unlawfully possessed, him indeed the act of registration has a tendency to set free. When Mr. Chalmers, then, and his fellows talk as if the registration would set free the greater part of the slaves, what is it that they declare ? Nothing less than this, that the greater part of the slaves are unlawfully possessed ! It is in vain they labour to disguise the confession. What we always come round to ; what shines through every subterfuge is, their terror that illegal acquisition should be stopt. But, undoubtedly, illegal acquisition ought to be stopt. And whatever means are necessary to prevent the existence of it ought no longer to be deferred. The mischief in the mean time is vast. Rarely has a great total of mischief been removed by means so very easy ; means capable of producing so little collateral inconvenience. There is no law which can possibly be executed without some inconvenience ; for it always produces some cost and some trouble. But seldom does it happen in legislation, that so much good can be attained with so little of this species of evil, as is to be attained by preventing the clandestine importation of negroes into the British West Indies, by a law for the registration of slaves.

“ To pave the way for such innovations.” O yes ; call it innovation ! That is a temptation, which it was not to be expected that you could resist. It is remarkable, however, that an imputation, the unmeaningness of which has been so very often placed in the most glaring light ; the unmeaningness of which is indeed so very obvious in itself, is not prevented by very shame ; the disgrace of an ignorance which betrays such unacquaintance with the useful knowledge of the age.

Why, every improvement, without one exception, from the beginning of time to this present hour, is innovation. The culture of corn is innovation; the building of houses is innovation; the British constitution is innovation; the reformation of Luther was an innovation; Christianity itself a prodigious innovation. Are all these things *bad*, because innovations? If things are not bad because innovations, why take the trouble of calling the registration of the slaves an innovation? We know it is an innovation, because it did not exist before. That is the very reason why a law is wanted, namely, to make it exist; because the existence of it, the innovation, if so you please to call it, will be a source of good.

The same thing which we have seen important to be observed in regard to the word *Jacobin*, is to be observed in regard to the word *innovation*. By a minute induction of the cases in which it is used as an imputation, it will be seen, that it is almost always employed against something which is good; something, the tendency of which is not to injure, but to benefit mankind; something, most commonly, to prevent the persons who employ it from benefiting themselves at the expense of the community to which they belong. This happens by a sort of necessity; because if the measure which you oppose is really a bad measure, that is, would produce evil, show the evil, and your object is gained; there is no use of crying *innovation*. But if a measure really good is proposed; if it be quite out of your power to show any evil that it produces, or any evil which is not greatly overbalanced by the good; then the cry of *innovation*, if addressed to ignorant people, may stand you in good stead; may serve to prevent a beneficent change; may serve to postpone a great improvement.

Mr. Chalmers next proceeds to the old story. All that the friends of the abolition have said in regard to the cruel treatment bestowed upon the slaves, is horrid calumny. The imagination can hardly picture a finer scene of beneficence than is displayed in the West Indies towards the blacks. "The records of their scholastic establishments are produced, for showing clearly that no distinction is made in their schools, between white children and coloured. The same documents equally demonstrate with full conviction, that coloured poor, the aged, and the infirm, receive the same protection as the white poor, and partake of the same relief. So apparent is it,

that the colonial institutions in those respects, if we might use the poet's language,

' Grasp the whole world of reason, life, and sense,  
In one close system of benevolence.'

This topic we may with safety leave to those who are better acquainted with the facts: to Mr. Stephen, for example, who has promised us a work, "to demonstrate, upon premises not to be disputed, that the colonial slaves are the most helpless and the most injured of mankind; that their wrongs and miseries are unparalleled; that upon earth there never was a species of bondage so degrading, odious, and severe." \* What will Mr. Chalmers say to this; when the pledge is redeemed, and this great gift is bestowed upon humanity?

We leave this question, not only because it is too wide for our present limits; but because it is foreign to the present dispute. If the good treatment of the slaves be an argument against any thing, it is an argument against the abolition acts; because, if the negroes are so happy in the West Indies, there can be no good reason for preventing their being carried to the West Indies. But, if there be good reason for a law to prevent their being carried to the West Indies, it never can be an argument against the means which are necessary for carrying that law into execution. Registration is one of the means necessary for carrying the abolition acts into effect. And nothing is a legitimate argument against it, except showing, either that it is ill adapted to the end; or that it would produce evil of another sort too great for the good to be obtained. The opponents of the measure show neither. It is not in their power. They have nothing therefore to offer against it, which is not irrelevant, sophistical, and deceptive. The friends of the measure show, that it is admirably adapted to the end; and produces little or no evil to compensate the great good which it will serve to attain. It is impossible that the argument in favour of any practical proceeding can be more complete.

We must produce the following passage, which is as neat a sample as we ever beheld.

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\* See the conclusion of the article in our last Number on the Letter of Mr. Stephen.



“ In this age of zeal, which drowns charity and skill, those projectors of novelty propose a new administration of justice ; because a negro, claiming to be free, cannot hope for success, when freedom is the end : but, whose justice is it, that is thus suspected ? It is the king's justice, in his provincial districts of the western world, which cannot be trusted in the claims of freedom. In those countries, as in England, the king is the fountain of justice : he appoints the judges ; he holds the courts ; his precepts call every party, and every jurymen into court ; and the king it is, who executes judgment in righteousness. The justice, which is thus distrusted, is a fundamental principle, however, of the British empire. We thus perceive, then, from high authority, that if the Duke of Gloucester, the patron and president of the African Institution, and the members thereof, go within such jurisdictions, they are bound to submit to the law and justice of the Bahama government, if they should go within its limits : yet, say the same persons, a negro slave ought not to submit his claim of freedom to the law and justice of that government. There is even a still higher authority, than Lord Mansfield, which requires the African Institution to submit to the established government, *for the Lord's sake* : for, both St. Peter and St. Paul make government to be the institution of God, by commanding it to be obeyed, for the sake of God.

“ But, what say the calumniated Christians of the Bahama government to this unscriptural distrust of the king's laws there, when a negro claims his freedom ? 1st. They produce an act of their assembly, of some years standing, for facilitating the claim of such a negro. 2dly. They produce the affidavits of the chief justice, of the second judge, and of others, who have all been present at the trials of such claims of freedom ; and who swear, that the juries, and bystanders, generally lean in favour of freedom : so true is it, that evil-minded must the man be, who does not favour the weak against the strong, who does not feel for the slave, when contending for justice with his master.

“ There is another branch of the same topic of charge against the colonists, which demands some observation. The same zealots, who thus distrust the ordinance of God, pretend, in their strange project, to protect the several rights of infants, of lunatics, and of married women ; as if the law of the Bahamas, and indeed of every colony,

did not sufficiently protect the rights of such persons : what is this but disputing with the lord chief justice of England, whether the law and legislative government of every dominion does or does not, affect all persons and property within the limits thereof!"

Those "projectors of novelty" say, that "a negro, claiming to be free, cannot hope for success when freedom is the end." And this being the case, they desire that the administration of justice may be amended in this respect; or, as Mr. Chalmers is pleased to express it, "propose a new administration of justice." Now, does Mr. Chalmers prove, that a free negro, unjustly made a slave, and suing for his freedom, has a chance for success? Oh, no; he only gives us certain affidavits, that the people of the West Indies have a great leaning in favour of liberty! What then does he object against the demand of a remedy for this evil? Why he tells us, that this total want of all chance of success to a negro claiming his just right, and that a right of such unspeakable importance as his liberty, is "*the king's justice!*" Nor is this all: when he has told us, that this horrid injustice is "*the king's justice,*" he proceeds to tell us, that it is impious in the African Institution to seek a remedy against it! that there is a "higher authority than Lord Mansfield," meaning the authority of religion, "which requires them to submit to it *for the Lord's sake.*" People are to abstain from seeking a remedy to the poor negroes deprived of their dearest right—to abstain from this, *for the Lord's sake!* What a dreadful monster is the religion of Mr. Chalmers! What a being it is that he worships! A Moloch! a worse than Moloch, who only desired his votaries to pass their children through the fire to his grim idol. The Being to whom our devotions, we trust, shall ever be offered up, is not a Being who will forbid us to endeavour to procure the means to the unhappy negroes of obtaining their right, when that right is so great a blessing as their freedom; though the "*king's justice*" of every country upon earth should tend to deprive them of it. Such never shall be our justice! Such is not the justice of the God whom we adore!

It is curious to observe, that Mr. Chalmers calls this denial of redress to a negro deprived of his rights, "the ordinance of God." We do not cry out, Blasphemy, upon this. No: we recognize that Mr. Chalmers worships a different being from us. The idea is ut-

terly irreconcilable with that of the Being whom we worship. As soon would any one think of reconciling the ideas of light and darkness, heat and cold, or any the most contradictory which the mind ever conceived.

We have here an admirable specimen of the *jure divino* argument, for the support and preservation of all the mischief which power has perpetrated, or is capable of perpetrating, upon the face of the earth. All such mischief is to be revered, and kept undiminished, "*for the Lord's sake*." When our ancestors were immured in dungeons, stripped of their substance, and dragged to the stake for conscience's sake; all this cruel usage was "the ordinance of God;" and these impious, it seems, but most conscientious, most meritorious men, were in their blindness and guiltiness, not disobeying man, but God!

It is a great advantage when an author appears who exhibits a mischievous doctrine in all its deformity. Many are the writers, and many the speakers, who, at the present time, make use of the very same principles, of which Mr. Chalmers here avails himself, for defeating the project of registration. But they labour, as much as they can, to hide and disguise the disgusting parts. They divert the thoughts of the reader, if possible, into another channel; turn away his eyes from the horrid consequences at which he may be apt to revolt. They are cunning: they have address. Mr. Chalmers is more honest. He is plain and sincere. He firmly believes in the abominable principles which he inculcates.

Mr. Chalmers returns once more to the assertion, that the abolition acts produce the effects for which they were intended; and that there is no clandestine importation. We shall not repeat what has been said upon this head, either very shortly by ourselves, or very fully and convincingly by Mr. Stephen. To us one argument appears fully sufficient: the actions of the colonists are in contradiction to their words. Why make an outcry against the registration, if it can do you no harm? And what harm can it possibly do to you, except in preventing the profit of illicit importation?

"We have seen above," says Mr. Chalmers, "how much the projected registry of the colonial negroes would change manners, alter habits, and overthrow usages and privileges, which have existed time out of mind, and have grown sacred from their salutariness, through-

out many a year of enjoyment." What he means by "seeing above," we know not: we see not a word upon the subject, in any previous part of the discourse. If by the habits, usages, and privileges, here spoken of, he means the habits, usages, and privileges, of importing slaves, and using them with every species of cruelty the master choose; the authors of the measure of registration are so far from denying that it is their desire to put an end to such habits, usages, and privileges, that they make it their proclamation and boast, "Which have existed," says Mr. Chalmers, "time out of mind." By how much the longer, by so much the worse. The abolition, in that case, ought to have taken place long ago. That a change ought to have taken place long ago, is a monstrous reason to urge, why it should never take place at all.

If Mr. Chalmers can point out any other usages, habits, and privileges, which the registration affects, why does he not show them? We ask him what they are? But we get no answer. The conclusion is, They do not exist. In fact, they do not exist. What other habit, usage, or privilege, can the mere giving in evidence of a small number of facts, have any tendency to alter? The pretence is ridiculous.

"Sacred from their salutariness, through many a year of enjoyment." The habit, usage, and privilege, of importing negroes to make them slaves, and of using them after the manner in which it is proved to the world that they were used, "become sacred from their salutariness!" "Salutary," to whom? To the poor negroes? If salutary, that is profitable—to the *masters* of the negroes, the friends of human kind do not question. There is no injustice, no oppression, which in this sense is *not* salutary. It is all perpetrated to please somebody. But the object of all good men is to destroy a salutariness of this nature. The end of all good institutions, and all good laws, is to prevent one sort of men from having habits, usages, and privileges, that are injurious to others.

It is curious to see the versatility of the genius of Mr. Chalmers. From doctrines of high despotism, he proceeds immediately to those of high republicanism. Every sort of principle is good for the defence of West Indian slavery. Hear him.

"It may be now worth while to enter into a brief inquiry, with

regard to the *colonial constitutions*, which are thus endangered by such innovations. (1.) One of the fundamental principles of the colonial, as well as the *national* constitution, is, that the people were not made for the rulers, but the rulers for the people: a principle this, which was acted on, when the revolution of 1688 was accomplished, and was subsequently interwoven into the Act of Settlement. (2.) English emigrants, as they carry the jurisprudence of their country with them, also carry with them the same fundamental principle, as a part of the common law; which accommodates itself to English colonists, wheresoever they may settle on the desert coasts of the ocean: hence it is, that some of the ablest jurists, which have been bred in a country fruitful in great lawyers, have been of opinion, that taxes cannot be levied on such English settlers, without some *consent*, which is a term very congenial to the constitution. (3.) It is from the same principles, that every English colony is entitled to a *free government*, whereof *consent* is an essential ingredient; that the colonial constitutions were formed in the best times of our political history, when deference and authority were due, and yielded to the *consentient judgment*, and habitual practice, of the ablest lawyers and statesmen of those times. (4.) From those constitutional principles originated the colonial Assemblies, with the national approbation, by a thousand acts: the same hallowed source this, whence originated the Parliament, in a much earlier period, indeed. (5.) The truth, and fitness, of the intimations above, would still more distinctly appear, if we might run a parallel between the two legislative bodies, which are so analogous, as the Parliament, and Assembly, in their origin, and their ends."

The principles of despotism, if men would, at his bidding, admit them, would, we have seen, suffice to his end. The principles of republicanism totally fail him.

"The people were not made for the rulers; but the rulers for the people." We desire nothing more than accurate reasoning upon this principle, to be led by Mr. Chalmers whithersoever he pleases. Let us see. In the West Indies, the slave-masters may with great justice be considered as the rulers: the negroes as the people. "The negroes were not made for the sake of the slave-masters, but the slave-masters for the negroes." Does Mr. Chalmers adopt the conclusion?

Again, the whole of the people in the West Indies, both blacks and whites, both subject many and ruling few, are the subjects of the British government; and that government, if made for its subjects, is made for all portions and classes of them alike, the black portion as well as the white; the portion in that worst state of servitude called slavery, as well as the portion in that other state of servitude called hired service: and its great business, the great end for which it was made, is, to take care that no one portion or class of these subjects does injury to another; that no injury, for example, in the West Indies, is done by the white population to the black. Does Mr. Chalmers mean to tell us, that the British parliament owes no duties to the black part of the population, the welfare of which is confided to its care? To us it appears, that it owes the very same sort of duties to every black man, which it owes to every white man. When Mr. Chalmers applies the principle, that "rulers are made for the people," to the British Government and the people in the West Indies, he leaves the black people out of the account! The rulers, in this case, he would have to be made for the white people alone—not at all for the black. No body should be made for them! they, poor wretches, for every body?

Why seek to puzzle the question with the doctrine about consent to pay taxes? The registration of the slaves is not taxation. But this question, in respect to the West Indies, is rather more complicated than Mr. Chalmers, and the class to which he belongs appear to understand. If consent to the imposition of burthens is a necessary security, to prevent the burthens from becoming undue, why does Mr. Chalmers not demand that the blacks should have this security?—that they too should have their power of consent? If he will not allow the blacks to have any consent, let him not be angry if the British parliament insists upon consenting for them. Are the gentlemen of the West Indies to insist, because they ought not to be taxed without their consent, that no security whatsoever should be taken for good usage to the blacks?—that the blacks should be left totally without protection, to be treated by them well or ill, justly or unjustly, cruelly or humanely, just as they please? There is no principle of the British constitution by which this sort of claim is

sanctioned. Every virtuous feeling of the human breast rises up in rebellion against it. *Consent* indeed ! The gentlemen of the West Indies are far better represented in the British parliament than nine-tenths of the British people !

It is curious to observe with what composure this "divine right" man speaks of rebellion as the consequence of an act of the British legislature to register the slaves, which he calls an "essay of coercion."

"Beyond such an essay of coercion, the imprudence of statesmen could not easily go: if any outrage were offered, at the same time, to the persons, the principles, the property of the colonists, irritation and estrangement might be the effects. If an attempt were, meanwhile, made on the privileges of the Assemblies, and their utility and their existence were threatened with danger, civil contest might ensue, and provoked resistance might be the sad result. When coercion, during past times, was exercised by the French king, on the parliaments of France, we all know what consequences ensued. During the civil conflicts which followed, in the continental colonies, from the stamp act, though it was repealed, the parliament deprived the province of Massachusetts-bay of its legislative power. What, then, was the result ? It was repealed by the same authority in 1778 ? 'as it had been found,' saith the statute, 'to create great uneasiness in the minds of the inhabitants of the said province, and had occasioned jealousies and apprehensions of danger to the liberties and rights in several other of the colonies.' How much more wise had it been not to offer coercion to a sovereign court, which created such apprehensions in the other colonies, and which the repeal of 1778 did not by any means allay ! The Rubicon was passed, and the sword of civil war was now stained with kindred blood. From Milton, indeed, we might know, that to be warned, and taught, by *experience*, what before us lies, in daily life, is the *prime wisdom*."

Now only think of the wisdom of this kind of talk ; when the fact is, that if the British government were to withdraw its protection from these untractable gentlemen for twelve months, the blacks would exterminate every man of them. They themselves could retain no power over the blacks : they do not pretend that they could ;

it is the British government which gives it to them. It follows that the British government is responsible, in the sight of God and man, for the use which it permits to be made of that power. *Qui facit per alium facit per se*;—what is done by another, with the power given by the British government, is, in the eye of reason, done by the British government. If it gives to the colonists the whole of their power over the blacks, it is itself guilty of all the cruelty which they commit. Is it not bound, therefore, to take every security which it deems expedient, to prevent the power which it gives over the negroes in the West Indies from being abused? Of these securities, one, and in our opinion a highly important one, is the measure of registration.

Mr. Chalmers proceeds next to the redoubtable argument summed up in the sound of the word *property*. We say, the *sound*, because we no sooner advert to the *substance*, than the illusion which it labours to raise immediately vanishes.

Mr. Chalmers, however, says, "Every one was impressed with the constitutional principle, that private property cannot be sacrificed to *any idol*." The word *idol*, when used as in this passage, denotes some object which foolishly receives a much greater portion of regard than it is worth: the object in this case is *humanity and justice*. That is the idol,—that is the object to which we foolishly attach an undue portion of regard. Now we should think, and we do presume justly, that if we followed, in this case, the advice of the colonial gentlemen, we should be making an idol of property, and one of the most cruel idols that ever scourged the human race. What is the end of property? What is the purpose for the sake of which it is made to exist? The answer is, *Happiness!* Property is found to be necessary to the well-being of human creatures. If the contrary had been the case; if property had been injurious to the well-being of human creatures, it never ought to have had an existence; and, in fact, never would. This being the case, whatever distribution of the things useful to man is most conducive to the happiness of man—that is the distribution which best deserves to be converted into property. In fact, if the end be regarded; and if it is conduciveness to happiness that *makes* property; what is not conducive to happiness, is, in the true sense of the word, not property; it is subver-



sive of the very end of property ; it is usurpation ; and ought not to exist.

View the wretched sophism, made out of the *sound*, rejecting the *substance*, in another light. Property, as all the world know, admits of degrees. Property, in one case, implies a greater ; in another, a less number of powers. The lawyers have invented names for this diversity. They have their *dominium plenum*, and *dominium minus plenum* ; and this minor plenitude has a vast number of degrees. Thus, in regard to many articles of inanimate property, a hat, for example, or a coat, a man's power is almost unlimited ; he may use them, or abuse them ; he may cut them into a thousand pieces, or he may burn them in the fire. Over his house in the street he has not the same number of powers. If he attempt to burn it, he will be most severely punished. Over his cattle, his powers are still more limited ; not only may he not burn them, he must not use them with cruelty, otherwise he will be punished. Neither is there any reason, whatsoever, if the legislature think the existing laws insufficient to prevent cruelty to animals, why they may not make other laws more completely to answer that end ; and still further to restrict the powers of the owner. If ownership with regard to irrational animals is thus restricted, for the sake of preventing cruelty to those animals ; surely it is more incumbent that ownership with regard to human beings should be restricted, to prevent cruelty with regard to them. It is surely incumbent, that with regard to them, ownership should be so restricted, as not to admit of cruelty. To this end, we say, that the registration of the slaves in the West Indies is absolutely necessary. And this great object, the British legislature, we trust, will not suffer to be defeated, by a quibble on the word property !

So much for the arguments of Mr. Chalmers. The rest of the publication consists of a Report of a Committee of the Bahama Assembly, appointed to report upon the measure of the registration ; and certain documents annexed in support of the allegations of the Report. As far as the present question is concerned, the arguments in the Report coincide with the arguments of Mr. Chalmers. On our part, therefore, it would be little better than repetition to answer them. It is, however, an able production ; and shows well that the colonists have no lack of powers to give a strong colouring to any

cause ; a very fair one to the cause they like, a very foul one to the opposite.

A great part, however, of the matter of this Report, we consider as clearly foreign to the point at issue. A great part of the Report is exhausted in complaining of certain inconveniences imputed to some of the proposed modes of carrying the registration into effect. But, if there are any of the proposed modes, which could be replaced with better modes, we have not heard that there would be any opposition in any quarter to the adoption of these modes. The desire is, to get the best modes. But the argument of the colonists is very unworthy of that mental ability which the drawing of the Report abundantly testifies. Certain modes of executing a particular measure, they say, are bad ; therefore, the measure itself is bad. The conclusion is evidently ridiculous. If they would show good faith, and not, under cover of objecting to the mode, endeavour to decry the essence ; but meet the friends of the negroes in an honest desire to render the modes of carrying the measure into effect, as little onerous as possible, their suggestions would deserve all respect, and, from their local knowledge, might undoubtedly be of the greatest service. But this is not what they show the smallest inclination to do. They exaggerate the evil of the proposed modes with all the art of which they are masters, and all that liberty with facts, which a crowd of people, who compose their own public, and have a deep interest in what they assert, but seldom scruple ; and, as if these evils of the mere modes were evils of the essence, they cry out against the measure itself, and endeavour to prevent its existing according to any form, or in any mode. From this we are entitled to infer, that it is not the inconveniences of the modes, which they are principally enraged against.

What is necessary for them is—to show that these inconveniences cannot be lessened ; or rather to show, that the inconveniences, when lessened to the utmost, constitute a sum of evil, which all the good to be derived from the measure is insufficient to compensate. Unless this is proved, they prove nothing. This, if they argue honestly and fairly, is the case which they have to make out. Unless they do make it out, all their pretended reasoning is good for nothing. But this they have never yet attempted

to make out. This is a task which they have not yet begun. It is, indeed, a task which we are tempted to predict they never will begin.

On the other hand, what is so clear as to be almost too much for repetition, is—that the operation of writing in a book the circumstances necessary for the identification of a man's slaves, may be performed without occasioning any considerable inconvenience; and that the evil against which this is the only adequate security, is liable to be immense; the greatest conceivable misery of myriads of human beings.

What runs through all the reasoning and ontcries of the colonists upon this subject is the strange assumption, that the smallest inconvenience or burthen affecting them, is a matter of unspeakable importance; the mother-country should tremble to impose it upon them; but as for exposing the whole of the negroes of the West Indies, and even of the whole African coast, to the most dreadful state of human misery—that is a matter of no consequence at all. If any the smallest inconvenience should fall upon the colonists in taking securities against that misery; it is nothing but fire, and fury! We hear, as if the world ought to come to an end! as if all justice were banished from the face of the earth!

So it is with all those, in every situation, who possess undue power over any portion of their fellow-creatures. They speedily come to regard their own feelings as all in all; the feelings of the prostrate many as an object too insignificant to deserve almost any, the smallest portion of regard. What is true of the masters of mankind in general, it is not wonderful to find true of the masters of the blacks in the West Indies.

In this situation, to prevent evil, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a middle-man between the colonists in the West Indies and the prostrate blacks. That middle-man is the British parliament. All the efforts of the colonists are made to prevent its becoming that middle-man. They say it is not *entitled* to become a middle-man between them. It will be guilty of usurpation if it does so. It will perform an act of mere brute power, unsupported by a shadow of justice. Such is the extent of their pretension.

What the report argues with great art and vehemence in support of this pretension, is the old claim of an exclusive right in the colo-

nies to legislate for themselves. Enough surely has been said under this head to supersede the demand for repetition. It is a claim which, in the extent to which they carry it, is altogether absurd. A claim to legislate for themselves is a claim to govern themselves, and to be independent of the British government.

They forget too, and they are eager to forget, that the existence of the black population in the colonies constitutes an important circumstance, which is altogether inconsistent with this pretension; unless they will admit the black population to a share in their legislatures, and enable them to protect themselves. Without this, except the British legislature interferes, the black population are left altogether without protection; they are left completely at the mercy of men who have an interest in using them like brutes. As many times as we hear the right asserted of the colonists to legislate for themselves, so many times are we disposed to repeat, as our sole and sufficient answer—This is neither more nor less than a demand of power without check or limit, to treat the whole of the black population as you have an interest to treat them; that is, as brute beasts. Whether you ought to have such a power, let the world be judge!

If there were no black population in the West Indies, it is very evident that the claim of the colonies to legislate for themselves would stand on a very different foundation. In that case, there would be no part of the population which would not have a share in the legislature, and would not have the means of protecting itself. For the protection of one part of the population against the other, the supreme legislature would have no such occasion to interfere. The case is prodigiously different when the greater part of the population has no share whatsoever in the legislature; in this case, unless the supreme parliament interfere, there is no sort of misery which one portion of a community are liable to sustain at the hands of another, which will not be sure to fall upon the unprotected part. Is this a state of things, from the redressing of which the hands of the supreme legislature ought to be tied up? Is this a condition in which you say that it ought to have any portion of the human beings placed under its power, and therefore entitled to its protection?

The claim of the colonists not to be bound by laws to which they have not given their consent, we are very willing to meet, by receiv-

ing their representatives into the British parliament. But a claim to legislate just as they please between themselves and the blacks, is the most monstrous pretension that ever was set up by the subjects of any state. It is neither more nor less than a demand of liberty to erect every sort of injury which one set of human beings can have an interest in commencing against another, into a code of laws! To give one set of men a power of being always judges in their own cause, would be a trifle compared with this frightful excess of power.

Every step we take in this argument, only shows us more and more how urgent upon the British parliament is the obligation of the most effectual interference between the blacks and their masters.

The Report of the Bahama Assembly endeavours to divert attention from these important grounds of interference by working the word taxation.

The facts are these: In carrying the law of registration into effect, as in carrying any other law into effect, some expense is incurred. A law entirely regarding themselves and their own affairs, it seems but reasonable that the colonists should bear the expense of. The regulations proposed in the registry bill for this purpose, the Bahama Assembly exclaim against, as wrenching from them at once every blessing for which life is worth possessing. That the uproar is mere affectation, and only an effort to deceive by an artful use of popular phrases, is easy to be seen. A right claimed by the British legislature to draw taxes from the colonies for the use of the British state would be a claim, we confess, attended with danger; so long as the colonists are not represented in the British legislature; though, if we regard substance and not sound, there are few parts of the British nation so effectually represented in the parliament as the West India colonists. But be this as it may; a tax for the use of the colonists themselves; a tax to defray nothing but the expense of executing within the colonies a law of the colonies, stands on a very different foundation. There can be very little interest in the British parliament to be guilty of abuse in laying taxes of this description. But even this matter is altogether confined to the mode. We should have no objection to detach from the bill the clauses pointing out the mode of defraying the expense. If the colonists will tax themselves for that purpose in a manner perfectly sufficient for the purpose,

nothing more is to be desired. If not, the British parliament can raise the money by an additional impost upon their exports and imports.

The Bahama Assembly, too, end with threats. They are not, however, exactly the same sort of threats as Mr. Chalmers's. They are not threats of rebellion, they are only threats of emigration. For our own parts, if there was no alternative; if either the blacks must be left totally abandoned to the mercy of a set of men, who have an interest in imposing upon them intolerable burthens; or all the colonists emigrate; we should have no difficulty in our choice. The last is, in our apprehension, a trifling misery compared with the first.

The Bahama colonists, says the Report, would transfer themselves, their slaves and other property, to the foreign settlements in their neighbourhood. In the very first war, these settlements would all be captured by the British navy. And how would these colonists answer it, then, to the British government, and the British people?

Observe what, they themselves inform us, their attachment to their native country is worth. The trouble of writing in a book the circumstances necessary to identify each of their slaves, put in the scale against their love of their country, kicks it to the beam! What a light commodity!

As for emigration, no fear! The advantages they derive from their country, they well know, are far superior to the trouble of registering their slaves. This is a threat which they have no intention of carrying into execution.

One thing, however, is highly worthy of notice. The Bahama Assembly tell us, they could with the utmost facility transfer all their slaves to foreign settlements, in spite of all that could be done to prevent them. The power then of clandestine traffic is complete. And to all the asseverations of the colonists about the sufficiency of the abolition acts to prevent importation, such admissions as these are a sufficient answer.



